

Americans Call for Independent Commission to Investigate Trump's Ties to Russia

Last Monday, FBI Director Comey confirmed that the Trump campaign has been under investigation since July over potential collusion with the Putin regime. At the exact time the House Intelligence Committee was conducting a bipartisan investigation to examine Putin's interference in the 2016 election, including possible links between Trump and Putin's government, the Chair, Rep. Nunes, took a number of egregious steps over the last week that have undermined his credibility. His actions underscore the need for a bipartisan, independent commission to examine Russia's interference in the 2016 election.

According to a recent [Quinnipiac Poll](#), the majority of Americans agree that an independent commission should investigate links and coordination between Trump, his campaign and administration, and Russia:

- 66% of voters want an independent commission to investigate links between some of Trump's campaign advisors and the Russian government
- 63% of American voters are “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about Trump's relationship with Russia.
- 65% of voters say alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election is a “very important” or “somewhat important” issue.

Republicans in the Senate and House have come out in support of an independent commission:

John McCain (R-AZ): “...No longer does the Congress have credibility to handle this alone... I don't say that lightly...” [Greta Van Susteren, [3/22/17](#)]

Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC): “U.S. Rep. Walter Jones... became the first Republican member of the House of Representatives this week to support a proposed independent citizen commission to look into alleged Russian government interference in the 2016 election and any ties to President Donald Trump's campaign.” [McClatchy DC, [2/17/17](#)]

Republicans have also questioned Rep. Nunes' ability to lead a credible, bipartisan investigation:

Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK): “Loyalty can sometimes make you, you know, go a step too far...” [Washington Post, [3/27/17](#)]

Former Rep. Mike Rogers (R-MI): ““It sows distrust, it shows they don't have a good working foundation for really hard things...” [Washington Post, [3/27/17](#)]

In addition, newspaper editorials across the country are raising concerns:

New York Times: [Rep. Nunes Is a Lapdog in a Watchdog Role](#)

“[Nunes] destroyed the credibility of his committee... [made] clear that he is unfit for the job and should be replaced...” [3/23/17]

The Virginian-Pilot: [Time for an independent investigation into Russian hacking](#)

“If Nunes and Gowdy were interested in helping get to the bottom of the Russian affair, they could encourage the White House to come clean about what happened. They could act as honest brokers on behalf of the American people instead of obstacles to the truth.” [3/22/17]

The Arizona Republic: [Get politics out of Russian hacking inquiry](#)

“Nunes sent up a smoke screen — and we need to get beyond this kind of distracting political posturing. Way beyond it.” [3/25/17]

The Baltimore Sun: [Alternative fact of the week](#)

“House Republicans on the intelligence committee seemed to be more seriously invested in giving President Trump cover than in conducting an evenhanded examination.” [3/23/17]

Kansas City Star: [Doesn't the GOP want to know about Russia?](#)

“Given the seriousness of foreign interference in our democratic process, you’d think that learning what did and did not happen — and how we can prevent future incursions — would be the chief concern of lawmakers. Or that they’d at least prefer to come across as if that were the case. But no and no.” [3/20/17]

USA Today: [James Comey, Trump and the Russians](#)

“After all, a president should want to know whether people around him colluded with a hostile foreign power.” [3/20/17]

Here’s a look at how House Republicans have undermined their investigation:

Chairman Nunes visited the White House to view secret documents, and the next day briefed the President – who is a possible subject of the investigation, and informed the press – yet refused to share that information with members of the House Intelligence Committee:

“Why would Nunes need to brief the president on documents he viewed at a facility on White House grounds?” [Bloomberg View, [3/27/17](#)]

“Mr. Nunes, the California lawmaker, stood inside the Capitol’s Statuary Hall on Thursday evening, assuming a familiar set of positions: in front of a camera, giving cover to President Trump and defending himself.” [New York Times, [3/24/17](#)]

“... [Nunes’] answer seems to validate concerns that Nunes is acting more as a Trump ally than as the head of an independent congressional investigation.” [The Atlantic, [3/24/17](#)]

Following this meeting, Chairman Nunes canceled an open hearing with former DNI director James Clapper, former CIA Director John Brennan, and former Acting Attorney General Sally Yates.

“Most immediately, Nunes canceled an open hearing that had been scheduled for Tuesday with former senior officials who have battled Trump.” [Washington Post, [3/27/17](#)]

“Nunes’s behavior shows that the House Intelligence Committee’s investigation is already being impaired by partisan warfare... But the broader pattern in Nunes’s theatrics this week suggests he’s simply trying buy time and shield the Trump administration from what could be a high-profile and politically damaging hearing.” [Vox, [3/24/17](#)]

Today, the Ways and Means Committee will hold a markup of a resolution that would direct President Trump’s tax returns to be released, which would provide insight into his relationship with Russia. The committee is marking up the bill only because they want to avoid a vote on the House Floor.

“A Ways and Means majority spokeswoman said the committee either has to mark up the resolution, or the minority can bring it up on the floor. After the Committee reports the resolution, only the chairman or his designee can bring it up on the floor.” [Roll Call, [3/24/17](#)]

The American people want and deserve answers to outstanding questions regarding the Trump Administration’s relationship with Russia, and an independent, bipartisan commission with subpoena power is the only way to deliver those answers. It’s time for GOP leadership to put country before party and work with Democrats to establish a commission.

Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 3/28/2017